



REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

The restriction requirement has been repeated and has been made final. In an effort to place this application in condition for allowance, Applicant has herein canceled non-elected Claim 12. Withdrawal of the restriction requirement is thus now in order.

The Examiner has noted an inconsistency in the identification of the German priority application. Specifically, the extension "-34" appearing in the inventor-signed declaration does not appear on the certified copy of the priority document.

Applicant respectfully submits that both numbers (DE 100 18 020.5 and DE 100 18 020.5-34) refer to the same German patent application. The extension "-34" is used internally by the German Patent Office to facilitate the processing of the application. It will be readily recognized by those familiar with the assignment of German patent application numbers that the two numbers appearing in this application uniquely and unambiguously identify only one German patent application.

The inventor-signed declaration is objected to on the basis that the declaration does not acknowledge the filing of any foreign application, "with the same numbers as the priority document numbers". As noted above, Applicant respectfully submits that the declaration, the Claim for Priority and the certified copy of the German priority application will be recognized as identifying "with the same numbers", the German priority application. The requirement to file a substitute declaration therefore appears to be in error, and the requirement should be withdrawn. The addition of the extension "-34" in the declaration can be likened to the use of the suffix "B1" for an issued patent. The patent number alone, or with the "B1" suffix, uniquely and unambiguously identifies the original issued patent.

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An objection has been made to the drawings. Specifically, it is noted that certain areas of cross-section of insulating material are not shown with alternating thick and thin lines. Applicant has filed concurrently herewith a paper titled "Proposed Drawing Changes", which proposes changes that are believed to overcome the objection. Approval of the changes and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested. Formal drawings will be filed upon notification of the approval of the changes.

Claims 1-11 have been rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Inoue (U.S. 5,833,481). Applicant has herein amended Claim 1 in a manner which is believed to obviate this rejection.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the electrical connection arrangement employs a molding mass which is originally in a flowable state, which is "distributed" (original claim language) in the claimed basin, such that the connection portion of the electrical conductor track element and the connection zone of the electrical component are completely covered by the molding mass.

The additions to Claim 1 do not introduce new matter into the application. That the molding mass is introduced in a flowable state finds support at several places in the application. For example, at page 2, lines 22-24, the molding mass is disclosed as being applied in pasty form, and subsequently cured. This disclosure is followed by a notation that a liquid molding mass may be used, which, being a liquid, has the property that it flows. (p. 2, lines 28-31). At page 7, the molding mass is described in one preferred embodiment as being gel-like or in pasty form, and is subsequently cured. Epoxy resin is identified as a specific example. Each of these examples discloses the use of a "flowable" molding mass, with the gel-like or pasty form being indicative of a high viscosity flowable material.

The addition to the claim, as well as the noted portions of the specification, are all consistent with the original claim language, which called for the molding mass to be "distributed" in the basin.

The additional new feature presented in Claim 1 is directed to the molding mass completely covering the connection portion of the electrical conductor track element and the connection zone of the electrical component. This feature is disclosed at page 3, lines 5-6, at page 6, lines 18-20, and at page 7, of the specification.

The reliance on Inoue as an anticipating reference is misplaced, particularly in view of the changes now made in Claim 1. The purported "molding mass" 9 shown in the Inoue patent is a "grip block" which has two portions that snap together around a connection portion of an element. While it is believed that it is not reasonable, within the context of the Inoue reference, to contend that the grip block is "distributed" in a basin, Applicant herein has attempted to more clearly portray the different (and non-obvious) nature of the electrical connection arrangement of the claims.

The grip block ("molding mass") 9 of Inoue is a pre-manufactured solid piece, and not a molding mass which is originally flowable when distributed in the basin of the connector. As such, the Inoue patent does not anticipate Claim 1 as amended.

The flowable molding mass of Claim 1 is also not rendered obvious by the Inoue patent. The intended purpose of the grip block, and the manner in which it is employed in the Inoue device, would not lead one skilled in the art to conclude that the use of an initially flowable molding mass would or could be suitable for use in the Inoue device. The grip blocks are used to securely fasten around an end of a connector, and to then be fitted into a recess sized to receive the assembled grip block.

This permits the precise fitting and positioning of the components. Were one skilled in the art to contemplate using a flowable molding mass, this precision of placement would be lost, and would have to be achieved (if possible) in some other way. As such, the use of a flowable molding mass would not have been obvious in view of Inoue.

In employing a pre-formed part (grip block 9), Inoue thus does not realize the advantages provided by the present invention, in obtaining an optimal adaptation to the spatial form of the connection portion and to the connection zone, resulting in optimal coverage and optimal protection.

In view of the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-11 under 35 USC §102(b) is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 5-11 have also been rejected as being anticipated by Muzsley (U.S. 5,735,697). It is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, as amended, is not anticipated by this reference.

Muzsley does not disclose that the connection portion of the electrical conductor track element and the connection zone of the electrical component are "completely covered" by the molding mass, as is now set forth in Claim 1.

Muzsley discloses contacts 36 having inner or lower ends 46 that are designed to be electrically connected to contact pads 50 on circuit board traces 52 (see, e.g., Col. 3, lines 1-5). In the Official Action, the contacts 36 are characterized as being "electrical component[s]" 36. The inner or lower ends 46 are asserted to be "connection zone[s]", in the attempt to read the Muzsley structure on Claim 1. However, this interpretation fails to take into account that Muzsley does not strictly distinguish between a "connection zone" of the electrical component which serves exclusively for electrically connecting, and a body of the electrical component, which

serves a different purpose. It can be seen, in the first full paragraph at page 6 of the present application, that a connection zone is not to be regarded as comprising the entirety of the electrical component.

In what Applicant believes to be the correct and most reasonable interpretation of Muzslay, the contact 36 can not be considered to be the same element as the claimed "electrical component". However, in the event that a broader interpretation is somehow deemed to be reasonable, then the characterization of the contact 36 as being an "electrical component" carries with it the realization that the "connection zone" extends over the entire contact 36. In that event, the Muzslay construction still fails to anticipate Claim 1-3 and 5-11.

Using this latter interpretation, the connection portion of the electrical conductor track element and the connection zone of the electrical component (in Muzslay) are not completely covered by the molding mass, a limitation now present in Claim 1. Thus, the Muzslay construction does not teach or disclose each and every limitation set forth in Claim 1.

Muzslay does not achieve the advantages described in the present application, for example, a reduction of the influence of humidity in the air or of solid particles in the ambient air, on the electrical contacts. In addition, the distribution of a flowable molding mass only in the area of the connection portion and connection zone provides a construction that avoids deterioration of other components of the track element.

Muzslay also does not render obvious the subject matter of amended Claim 1. It would not have been obvious to substitute a simple electrical contact 36 for an electrical component, as that term is used in the context of the present invention and claims, in that the function or functions of that electrical component would be lost if replaced only by a contact.


Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 1-3 and 5-11 under 35 USC §102(b) in view of Muzslay is believed to have been obviated, and it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

New Claim 13 has been introduced in this amendment. It is respectfully submitted that this claim does not introduce any new matter into the application, and that the claim is clearly and patentably distinguishable over the cited art of record. The claim depends from Claim 1, and sets forth that the electrical component has a body that forms a part of the basin. This feature is not believed to be disclosed, taught, or suggested by the cited Inoue and Muzslay patents. The claim is therefore believed to be allowable.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant believes that all claims as currently presented are allowable over the references cited in the Official Action, and are, in all other respects, in condition for allowance. All objections and rejections are believed to have been overcome by this Amendment, and withdrawal of all such objections and rejections is respectfully requested. Passage of this application to issue at an early date is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

By: 
John C. Kerins
Reg. No. 32,421

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
Telephone: (703) 610-8649
#9177246v1

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

1 1. (Amended) An electrical connection arrangement comprising an electrical
2 conductor track element having at least one connection portion electrically connected
3 to a connection zone of an electrical component, wherein a wall is provided in the
4 vicinity of said connection portion and said connection zone, such that a basin is
5 formed and [a] an originally flowable molding mass is distributed in said basin, such
6 that said connection portion of the electrical conductor track element and said
7 connection zone of the electrical component are completely covered by the molding
8 mass.